



# Upper Smoky Hill Regional Advisory Committee Meeting Notes

## Upper Smoky Hill Regional Advisory Committee (RAC) Meeting

1:00 pm, Tuesday, April 2, 2019

Scott County Library Conference Center, 110 W. 8<sup>th</sup> Street, Scott City, KS

### Members in Attendance:

Name	City	Category	Term	Present
Shane Mann (Chair)	Quinter, KS	Irrigation	2019	Yes
Frank Mercurio (Vice-Chair)	Scott City, KS	Conservation/Environment (cc)	2019	Yes
Maurice Miller	Healy, KS	Agriculture Industry	2019	Yes
Mike Todd	Scott City, KS	Public Water Supply (cc)	2019	No
Farrin Watt	Leoti, KS	Agriculture (cc)	2021	No
Kyle Spencer	Scott City, KS	Groundwater Management	2021	Yes
Richard Randall	Scott City, KS	At Large Public (cc)	2021	Yes
Shelly Turner	Healy, KS	Financial	2021	No
VACANT		Industry/Commerce (cc)	2021	

### Others in attendance:

Name	Agency
Greg Graff	GMD1/KWA
Mike Meyer	KDA-DWR
Brownie Wilson	KGS
Alexandra Geisler	KWO
Armando Zarco	KWO
Alicia Allen	Agriculture

### Welcome and Introductions

Chairman Shane Mann began the meeting at 1:10pm. A quorum was present; five of the eight committee members were present.

### Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved as presented.

### Review and Approval of August & January Meeting Notes

Richard Randall motioned to approve both sets of meeting minutes. Maurice Miller seconded. The August and January minutes were both approved.

### **KGS Aquifer Update – Brownie Wilson**

Brownie Wilson gave an overview of how the cooperative water level program well measurements went this year, including the provisional water level change data for 2018 – 2019. Overall the changes for the year weren't too bad, but this was driven in part by larger than average precipitation. It is not so much that recharge is increased, but rather that increased precipitation decreases pumping demands. On average the water-level change for the Upper Smoky Hill region was up by 0.10 ft. based on preliminary data. Kansas is unique in the availability of data from historic water use reports. This data

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**KWO Planner:** Alexandra Geisler, 785-296-0865; [alexandra.geisler@kwo.ks.gov](mailto:alexandra.geisler@kwo.ks.gov)  
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allows for regional characterization looking at what the aquifer is doing over time, providing the ability to see patterns such as the connection between water level change and groundwater use over time.

In addition to annual well measurements there is the Kansas Index Well Program. Index wells provide the ability to characterize what is happening at the local level and how the aquifer responds to pumping with continuous, real-time measurements. Looking at the data from these wells, such as the index well in Thomas County, has shown that water levels are not in a constant state of decline. The end-of-season recovery is similar no matter the variation in climactic and pumping conditions. With this insight the aquifer water balance was rewritten to account for net inflow and pumping. When looking at a regional level, a percent reduction needed for stable water levels could be reached by plotting average annual water level change vs. annual water use. Using this methodology, a 22% reduction on average across the entire Upper Smoky Hill Region would be needed to stabilize water levels. Remember to look at these numbers with caution, these are averages and there are many extremes that may skew the numbers.

Discussion turned to playas after Greg Graff asked about using them as a recharge option. Brownie explained that they can provide recharge, but they quickly seal up which is why you see standing water. They could enhance recharge but would not function as a constant delivery mechanism.

### **Water Technology Farm & Field Day Update – Armando Zarco**

Armando Zarco showed the committee where to access information about the Water Technology Farm Program on the Kansas Water Office website. In addition to an overview of the program and an updated map, the webpage includes information on each of the individual farms and access to the first annual Technology Farm Report covering 2018 harvest data. Greg Graff asked about K-States data, but Jonathan is still working on it and has not published or reporting anything yet. This is not the same as KWO's data included within the report, but the data that Jonathan hand collects and uses to look at the agronomy.

There are 10 technology farms still in place and KWO is pursuing 5 additional farms. Feedback indicates that 3 years is not enough time to evaluate, so those even the farms through that first 3-year period will be continuing with the program. Everything ultimately depends on funding availability. Homeland Farm, one of the additional 5 added this year, is located within the Upper Smoky Hill Region. Geiger in the East will be the first dryland technology farm, and the other three additional are located in central Kansas. The next step is to have field days in the July/August timeframe, with dates selected by the end of May or early June. If anyone knows individuals in the area who may be interested in joining the program, put them in touch with Armando.

### **LEMA Update – Kyle Spencer**

The primary issue that remains with the proposal is the appeals process. This past summer the process included a test pump for 135 days. The board has adjusted from 135 to 150 days which has appeased some of the complaints. The issues brought up at the annual meeting included the appeals process & concerns from new land owners. If a new land owner purchased property after the historical period and became owners after 2015, then they would be stuck with the use of the previous owner. In response to this problem the board has adopted a "carve out" for new owners that if they can document that they were not the owner during that time, they are essentially guaranteed a pump test. The board still has the final say on whether or not to approve. Other than the issues with the appeals there was very little griping at the annual meeting about the plan itself or the percentage reductions. The other significant change was made the morning of the annual meeting. Initially the carry-over was 50% from each 5-year term to the next. The board decided to change that to 100% carry-over.

Right now, the board still needs to review comments on the plan from the Chief Engineer. They haven't had the opportunity to go through the plan to make those adjustment or clarifications. The hope is to get the plan for Wichita County submitted

before June in order to have it in place for 2020. Right now, the first 18 months are available for appeal, but some individuals want the appeals to be open for the first 5-year period.

### **SOTR RAC Presentations & Outreach Efforts**

Alexandra Geisler reminded the committee of the presentation they have seen in draft form at previous meetings. It is an edited version of what the Kansas RAC put together to use for outreach in their region. Instead of the planners putting the presentation together, the approach that the other western RACs decided on was to have a group of committee members help to put the presentation together. Since it will be a resource for the individuals of the RAC to use, it makes sense to have members assist in making it, giving the committee more control of the content.

Alexandra asked if this group still wanted to create a presentation, and if they would like to take a similar approach. Everyone agreed that it would be beneficial to have as a resource. With a small committee it was decided that a google doc version would be shared with everyone to provide comments and aid in making a version for use in the Upper Smoky Hill.

### **2019 Membership Drive**

Alexandra Geisler asked everyone to look at the sheet included in the meeting materials that shows the membership drive timeline, and a table that highlights all members with a 2019 membership expiration. Those committee members, their official expiration date being 6/30/2019, should have received an email notification from her in March. The open call for applications will be during the month of May, and anyone interested in a position, including current members, will need to apply by May 31<sup>st</sup>. The KWA RAC Operations Committee will review candidates in June, and make recommendations for the full KWA to take action on at the July meeting in Goodland. Alexandra added that she can collect any completed applications at the end of the meeting, and has extra blank applications for anyone that needs one.

### **Agency Reports**

Kyle Spencer GMD1: There was a controversy regarding the board member election at the annual meeting, of the votes that came in many were questionable. Prohibited proxy voting did take place, and with those votes, two new board members were elected. They have both since conceded to the incumbents, and this morning the board developed an additional voting policy to supplement the GMD Act. The Cost-share program is still going and the application period still open. Applications have picked up since the annual meeting, and best guess is that most of it will be used up with 2 months to go. Probes, pivot control systems, and bubblers are the main three items requested. The GMD also contributed another \$5,000 to Water Technology Farms on top of that fund.

Mike Meyer KDA-DWR: Office in Garden City did physically move to 4532 West Jones Avenue. Water use reports were a huge success with over 88% of all reports submitted online. Within a week or two that data was available for use. A few tweaks will be made to improve it, but it should look relatively the same next year. There were only 15 late reports across the state.

Alexandra Geisler KWO: The Water Office has a new CFO, and several other positions will be changing internally. Armando asked the members their thoughts on January's joint meeting, and the feedback received was positive.

### **Other Business**

Public Comments – None

Messages to Kansas Water Authority – None



## Upper Smoky Hill Regional Advisory Committee Meeting Notes

### Future Meetings –

GMD1 Board Meeting – April 17<sup>th</sup> @ 8am – Scott City

Kansas Water Authority – April 18<sup>th</sup> @ 8am – Abilene Civic Center

Next RAC Meeting – Budget Review in June

### Adjourn

Maurice Miller motioned to adjourn the meeting. Frank Mercurio seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 2:52pm.

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